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Editor's Note

Publish or Perish. That is the Mantra which though not new, has taken the scientific committee by storm, especially in recent times. If this same Mantra had captured the imagination of the scientist, that would have definitely benefitted humanity and science. However, it has failed to stimulate the true imagination, and has left behind in its wake the desire to attempt increasing numbers of publications for the purpose of visibility, academic limelight, access to easier grants and more recently in an Indian context, for the purpose of promotion at work.

The eagerness to get articles published in indexed journals has resulted in the sprouting up of too many scientific journals, and also of indexes. In an attempt to try and separate the chaff from the grain, there are now citation indexes and impact factors. But the sheer volumes make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to filter out the quality from the quantity. And in this scenario, what happens to the ethics that are to be associated with any scientific endeavour?

Ignorance of something does not absolve the indulgence, and this is right both at a moralistic as well as legal standpoint. What are the ethical issues involved in the academic and scientific practice of any knowledge? This is a very vast topic in itself, and it would be difficult to cover the various issues and complexities of this here, in an editorial. However, I shall make an attempt to at least familiarize a few of the terms involved in this topic.

There are several ethical issues — author dispute, duplicate publication, redundant publication, data fabrication and falsification, salami slicing, plagiarism, animal and human welfare issues, conflict of interests, submission irregularities — to name a few, which we all need to be definitely aware of. Author dispute is self explanatory, but importantly, providing one's patients, helping in collecting data, arranging funds, being in charge of a Department etc does NOT automatically make a person eligible for authorship. Duplicate submission is submitting to more than one journal at the same time – ethically, only after withdrawing from one (or being rejected) should an author submit to another journal for consideration. Redundancy is the use of a part or whole of a previously published article in a newer one. Fabrication is fictitious data, falsification is data manipulation, and using the same material or data to create several short publications (obviously to increase one's numbers) when they could have actually been one single article is sometimes called salami slicing. Plagiarism is a term we all know of. Conflict of interest is when the study result could have been potentially influenced by another underlying interest, most commonly financial gain from a sponsoring party. These are to name just a few of the several ethical aspects. Many writers, unaware of these as a term or an entity, are guilty of unethical practices, and few others do so knowingly too.

We must be fully aware of all these issues, and also endeavour to abide by them at all costs without compromise so as to set good examples of ethical conduct. The current scenario in the country is such that most of us are unaware of many of the issues, and then inadvertently indulge in the breach of these; or when aware, imagine that we may ignore these values and get away with it. We sacrifice the ethics for the purpose of that extra publication towards a promotion or for that extra academic visibility. Today, when there is a boom in the education sector, each of us, when we perform an unethical act, is telling our future generation that it is OK to twist ethics. There can be nothing more dangerous.

These ethical codes govern not only the writer, but also the peers who review, and also the editor who is under pressure to bring out issues on a regular basis. So there are various journals which get indexed sooner than they are actually out in the world, and then there are so many indexes out there that people think any journal is indexed these days! Many of us are not aware that “indexed” per se is not enough for a promotion, rather only a few indexes are accepted currently, at least as per rule (The list will expand but there is a list). There are not many of us who understand that “indexed” per se is not a guarantee for quality in times when peer reviews are being handed out to people randomly selected from google lists, and when “peers” themselves review for the purpose of the mention in their CV.

Anyway, the purpose of my editorial is to alert the reader to these issues, and to encourage them to be aware so that they will not err inadvertently at least. As for purposeful deviations, we can only hope for the inner conscience of each person to guide him.

The two issues of this year’s volume are being released simultaneously as a combined one. There was a real dearth of articles in the first half of 2016, with most submissions coming only after July. I request all the readers of this journal, and KOA members to actively involve in scientific writing in a quality and ethics bound manner, as only their timely and regular contributions will help in the indexing of our journal with a reputed index. This will benefit nobody more than the readers of KJO and the members of KOA.

Wish you all a Happy 2017!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Girish Gopinath". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some overlapping letters.

Girish Gopinath